

BLACK SHIRTS, ITALIAN STYLE

By CLAYTON S. COOPER

Drawing by ALBERT LEVERING



A FANTASY OF WASHINGTON SQUARE

News of a successful uprising in his beloved Italy is enough to jar Garibaldi from his pedestal

guns and hands of fierce looking youth with clubs and wearing their death's-head belts filled the main thoroughfares. It was clearly a case of class war, with the radicals on the defensive. The Fascisti had accepted the challenge of Marxian Socialism, driving it to cover by the use of its own rough and violent method, and doing it first.

It is not easy for an American to understand how such a bloodless revolution could come about as that which marked in Italy the last days of October, when over the ruins of a ministry forced out by threats of violent seizure a large composite army, representing peasants, industrial workers, sons of wealth and culture, farmers and nobility—an army even more picturesque than Garibaldi's famous "Thousand"—entered the gates of the historic Roman city borne along on the applause of the multitude like legions of some Caesar returning from their wars. It seemed less incongruous to the Italian evidently, for the King himself, keeping his head and saving the day, received the new Garibaldi with embraces and extended to him the Premiership, saying: "I am persuaded that with the best energy, enthusiasm and faith of the country enlisted all will go well."

As a matter of fact one must understand something of the genesis of this movement of Fascism in Italy in order to judge the present situation. The Fascisti did not originally

anticipate any such national power and prestige as force of circumstances has now thrust upon them. The movement began as a more or less loosely organized band of ex-soldiers, students and shock troops, who were determined that the war's sufferings and tragedies would not go for naught. Fascism first represented a justified reaction against the excesses of the Socialists. With many other Italians these early Fascisti also felt that Italy had not received just treatment at the Versailles conference and they were particularly desirous that the country for which they had fought should secure its rightful place in the sun. At first, when the Bolshevik influences appeared among the Italian workmen, the Fascisti assumed some of the characteristics of the Ku-Klux Klan and their methods could hardly be justified in anything like a law-abiding democracy.

In Florence, for example, the Fascisti were frequently reported to have captured Socialist and Communist leaders and under threat of violence and even death at times ordered them to induce their men to go back to work. The engineer of a large power house in Florence was seized by the representatives of this self-appointed police and notified that if the lights of the city were not restored in an hour's time both he and his family would suffer the consequences.

Mlle. Angele turned around and, suddenly becoming maternal, took a step toward me and murmured: "Don't be afraid, little one. Go ahead. I will follow you. I have only a word more to say."

When she rejoined me I discovered to my great astonishment still a third person in her, who had no longer the proud calm of the first nor the tragic beauty of the second. This unknown had a body as stiff as gray stone and hands like soft, cold clay. Although her eyes were dry, grief submerged her like a torrent. The most careless glance would have noted this and would have guessed this drama of abandonment.

Three days later Mlle. Angele came again to explain to me the fables and the Rule of Three. She had become calm and reserved. The people of the village bowed low to her, and the women, who felt a sort of gratitude because of the unflinching correctness of her bearing, said maliciously to the men: "There ought to be more like her. Then women killers would lose all their time."

Twenty years and more passed. Returning to the village, this story, long since forgotten, was recalled to me by the sight of the school-house.

I had lived in the hurly-burly of cities, where violent emotions are worn smooth like the stones in a rapid current. And the fashionable drama had shown me lovers betrayed, but so forgiving that in the third act they pressed their rivals to their breaking hearts—wives,

It is needless to say that such pressure brought to bear by armed men usually had the effect of producing prompt action. In certain cities the work of the Fascisti in its earlier days was decidedly for the benefit of the community, as in the case of the strike of the peasant laborers at Ferrara at the moment when the harvest was being gathered. The Fascisti appeared upon the scene, gathered the crops, then nailed a notice on the church door warning the strikers that the Fascisti had been there and that any reprisals against the landlords would be met with instant death.

In accordance with the Italian love for the dramatic and the picturesque, the Fascisti methods were both vivid and unexpected. The massing of large numbers of Fascisti in the midst of Communist or Socialist uprisings was a common method of impressing the enemy. Last summer, when trouble arose in the vicinity of Florence, the Fascisti organized a parade, calling in their adherents from the surrounding country, and marched 30,000 armed men through the streets of the Florentine city.

As the movement increased in numbers, power and responsibility, the spirit of nationalism and loyalty to Italy grew to such an extent that the Fascisti had been likened at various times to the Garibaldians, to the

too, no longer loved, who with some sublime phrase—or comic, as the unsympathetic might say—yielded their places to the husband's type-writer.

In short, I went to see Mlle. Angele to assure myself that she had become a stout village gossip, and who, perhaps, was bringing up by way of honest revenge a child of the unfaithful cousin's.

But from the first moment I discovered the hate—that is to say, the tenacious and hopeless love—which gnawed at her lonely heart. Very straight, very slender, her hair white, her skin wrinkled, her lips finely drawn and her eyes hollow and brilliant—thus the teacher stood out before me.

As she was dressed in black, without any note of relief, I ventured to ask her if she had lost a relative.

She answered with animation, as if an atrocious joy filled her soul: "Yes, I lost a cousin two months ago. He left his widow penniless, for he had wasted her dowry in foolish enterprises."

"What is she going to do?" I asked.

"How should I know?" the teacher answered lightly. "Let her work and suffer. That will help her to pass the time. Why should she not be alone in misfortune, since she wished to be alone in her happiness, her stolen happiness?" Mlle. Angele almost hissed out.

And I saw that on the sill of old age she hated with as much passion as she had loved in her prime.

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Thus there comes into well-nigh unlimited power, providing the next elections confirm the wish and demands of the Fascisti, a new order for Italy, with a leader of unique and unusual deportment. Benito Mussolini, thirty-six years old and by far the youngest Premier Italy has ever had, an ex-Socialist editor and agitator and now a thoroughgoing dictator as appearances would seem to point, is hardly the type one would expect to represent the Conservative or right wing of government, which undoubtedly is the trend of Italian public sentiment at present.

The son of a blacksmith, Mussolini has had a varied career. He speaks French, German and English and has traveled throughout Europe, formerly carrying on an active Socialistic propaganda. He was expelled from Switzerland for such teaching and was also arrested by the Austrians at Trent in Austria-Hungary for carrying on the Irredentist propaganda among the Italian population. He then returned to Central Italy, where he founded the Socialistic newspaper entitled "Class Warfare." When Italy declared war on Turkey Professor Mussolini headed a strike, was arrested, and while in prison wrote a book on John Huss.

Later as editor of "Avanti," the leading Socialist paper whose circulation he increased from 20,000 to 100,000, his career as a Socialist came to an end. The World War changed Mussolini from a radical to a fervid Fascisti. He was expelled from the Socialist party for his attitude relative to intervention and he founded the "Popolo d'Italia," the Fascisti organ, and later, when Bolshevism and Communistic menace threatened Italy, Mussolini organized the Fascisti as its deadly opponent.

The task confronting him in the new Italy involves subtle and complex elements. It is easier to make revolutions than it is to construct stable governments. The acid test of Fascism is ahead, and the end is not yet. Trevelyan, the historian, said that Germany was a greater country than Italy, but Cavour was a greater statesman than Bismarck. Bismarck's policy was to rule by blood and iron; Cavour by moral energy, appealing to the spirit of humanity and progress in all peoples. Bismarck in his building struck down his neighbors—Denmark, Austria, France. Cavour left no wounds in bringing into being "a state created not by conquest, but by consent."

Will Mussolini follow in the train of Italy's great statesman and combine with his Garibaldian traits the abilities of Cavour? Or will he assume the German conquest attitude toward Italy's neighbors, and thus open old wounds and retard the coming of European peace?

A great door of opportunity opens before Mussolini. The way is fraught with dangers. Major General James Wolfe once sent a famous dispatch to Pitt: "There is such a choice of difficulties that I own myself at a loss how to determine." I doubt not that the new Italian Premier, when he gets well involved in Italian politics, will have a similar feeling.

Mussolini has undoubted courage, is of high power electrically and mentally, and is possessed not only of dynamic force but of traits of commanding leadership. He has in his favor the fact that Italians have always preferred to follow personalities rather than principles and can read their history in the brilliant lives of a Cmsar, a Virgil, a Dante, a Mazzini, a Cavour and a Garibaldi. There is also behind this movement the best blood and driving power of the young and patriotic Italy. The country as never before is conscious of its competence in redeemed territory. A real industrial renaissance, begun even before the war, is now getting under way again, and in the words of Professor Herron in his recent admirable book, "The Revival of Italy":

"Italy to-day teems with the voices, with the clamors and vital forces, with the turbulent overlife; indeed, of a new national spring-time."

RUSSIA STAYS DRY

By ERNEST CHAMBERLAIN, JR.

MOSCOW.

HERE in Russia there seems to be little support for the rumor which originated some time ago to the effect that the Soviet government is planning to revive the Czarist monopoly of the manufacture and sale of vodka. Far from approving any such scheme, the official press carries on a constant vigorous campaign against the surreptitious "home brewing" which is going on. Three special courts were recently set up in Moscow to deal summarily with cases of bootlegging. Any one who is convicted of selling vodka is sentenced to be deprived of his living quarters—severe punishment in a crowded city where apartments can only be obtained at prohibitive prices.

Apparently, there is official realization that the erstwhile national drink, with its alcohol content of from 38 to 48 per cent, was a far greater economic evil than a source of revenue.

It was the late Czar who took advantage of the war emergency to issue an imperial edict against the sale of vodka, thus carrying into effect a reform he long had desired. Even in war time it was a radical and courageous act, for Russian finance was based largely on the state liquor monopoly. In ending the vodka scourge and causing the reorganization of his Ministry of Finance to meet the situation, the Czar expressed his sorrow at "the melancholy spectacle of the people's helplessness and the family wretchedness, the inevitable results of inebriate life," which he himself had witnessed in various parts of his country; and he made the declaration that "the prosperity of the state exchequer ought not to be made dependent upon the moral and material ruin of so many of my subjects."

Not satisfied with the official measures against traffic in vodka, "Pravda" recently issued a fiery temperance appeal to its readers. The appeal read as follows:

"A drunkard is worse than an animal. The man who makes and sells vodka for profit turns people into idiots. He is a thousand times worse than the unhappy drunkards

themselves. The working class needs clear heads, honest hands, bright eyes. The working class must carry on a merciless struggle with drunkenness and a thrice merciless struggle with the poisoners of the people. Working men and women: Drive these bootleggers who spread poison out of their filthy holes. Brand them with shame in your working class papers. Write the truth about them in your own "Pravda."

The appeal was followed by several letters from workers on the same subject. These letters cover the familiar ground of the temperance advocate. They emphasize the waste of precious food, the injury to the worker's health, the suffering of his family. There is also a constant appeal to working-class pride against an unworthy and degrading vice. The case of a proletarian poet who apparently fell a victim to the attractions of Bacchus and ended in a police court is pointed out as a horrible example. The action of the workers in a certain factory in upholding the dismissal of one of their fellows for drunkenness is highly commended. The letters plead for more vigorous action on the part both of the state and of the trade unions.

In short, this whole section of "Pravda" could have been taken over and published, with few alterations, by the Anti-Saloon League or some similar body in America. Taken in connection with a number of other articles along the same line which have appeared in the Soviet press during the last few weeks, this appeal, with its vivid denunciation of the evils of alcoholism, would certainly not suggest any prospective governmental sanction of the manufacture and sale of vodka. In fact, it may be said that the Soviet government is fighting harder against bootlegging than any other government in the world, unless it be that of the United States. Prohibition in Russia, it should be understood, applies only to vodka and to similar beverages of high alcoholic content. Wine, beer and kvas, a Russian equivalent for hard cider, are sold without any interference.

THE INNER FLAME

By ISABELLE SANDY

Translated by William L. McPherson

AT THIRTY years Mlle. Angele seemed to my childish eyes to have attained complete maturity. Her severe beauty, of which the men spoke with knowing smiles, did not exist at all for me, simply because she wore austere and somber clothes.

Only once did Mlle. Angele appear to me in all the beauty of the wicked angels, and with respect and fear I loved her.

Of this beauty, which I discovered between two glances of passion—as at night a majestic and tranquil lake shows itself between two flashes of lightning—she gave a violent and final manifestation one night toward the end of winter before my startled eyes.

"Are you coming, little one?" the teacher asked.

The lesson which she gave me twice a week after her day with her classes had just ended with a joyous slamming of school books. Mlle. Angele lived in the schoolhouse, about five hundred yards away from our place. She stayed there on Sundays some humble

in the corner of the big garden which she had turned over to one of the peasants who furnished her with vegetables in return. How rarely regulated was the life of this lonely woman, who could have married but never wanted to! Mothers talked of her virtue to their daughters. But the men whispered about her among themselves. And I knew later that Mlle. Angele's eyes glowed with a fire which was not that of sainthood.

With my nine years she was going to let me guess the mystery of her life.

So I followed the teacher, for the country was safe, and various children of the village playing on the roads would be at hand to accompany us on our return.

That evening, one of those preceding early spring, was mild and clear. Without hesitation I followed my companion into the bypaths which she took. Moreover, my hand was held tight in hers, which was cold and nervously clanked.

We reached a clump of woods as shut in and secret as a boudoir. Beds of moss, mirroring pools, patches of violets—nothing was lacking to this idyllic setting.

"Pick me a bouquet, dear, I see over there one of my cousins, who is starting away on a long journey and I am going to bid him goodbye."

This announcement seemed to me entirely natural. To a childish brain which peopled the woods with hobgoblins and fairies the presence of a cousin of Mlle. Angele's did not need to be explained. Nevertheless, the nearest town to ours was five miles distant. And to receive cousins did not Mlle. Angele have at the school her little combination dining room and sitting room, with its stiff, highly polished furniture and the big arm chair done in horse-hair?

In the silvery light of the gloaming I pursued passionately my hunt for the violets. Mlle. Angele could not have chosen a more discreet chaperone.

Suddenly a voice cried:

"Is it all over, then? You intend to go away and leave me? Answer me, you coward! You coward! Will you dare to confess that you are going to marry her—that other woman, the heiress?"

Trembling, I fixed my eyes on this excited couple, whose hostile voices had just drowned out a nightingale's notes.

The hobgoblins and fairies took a hasty flight, while the humble and tragic story of human beings wrote itself in flashes of fire against the oncoming night.

I approached, but they did not notice me. And I saw the true visage of this lonely woman, her visage of hatred and of love. And that beauty of one possessed by love, which the men divinized. I saw it at last—refulgent, threatening and brutal.

No, it was not the patient teacher, who explained to me Fontaine's fables and the Rule of Three.

I called to this other person in a voice of anguish.